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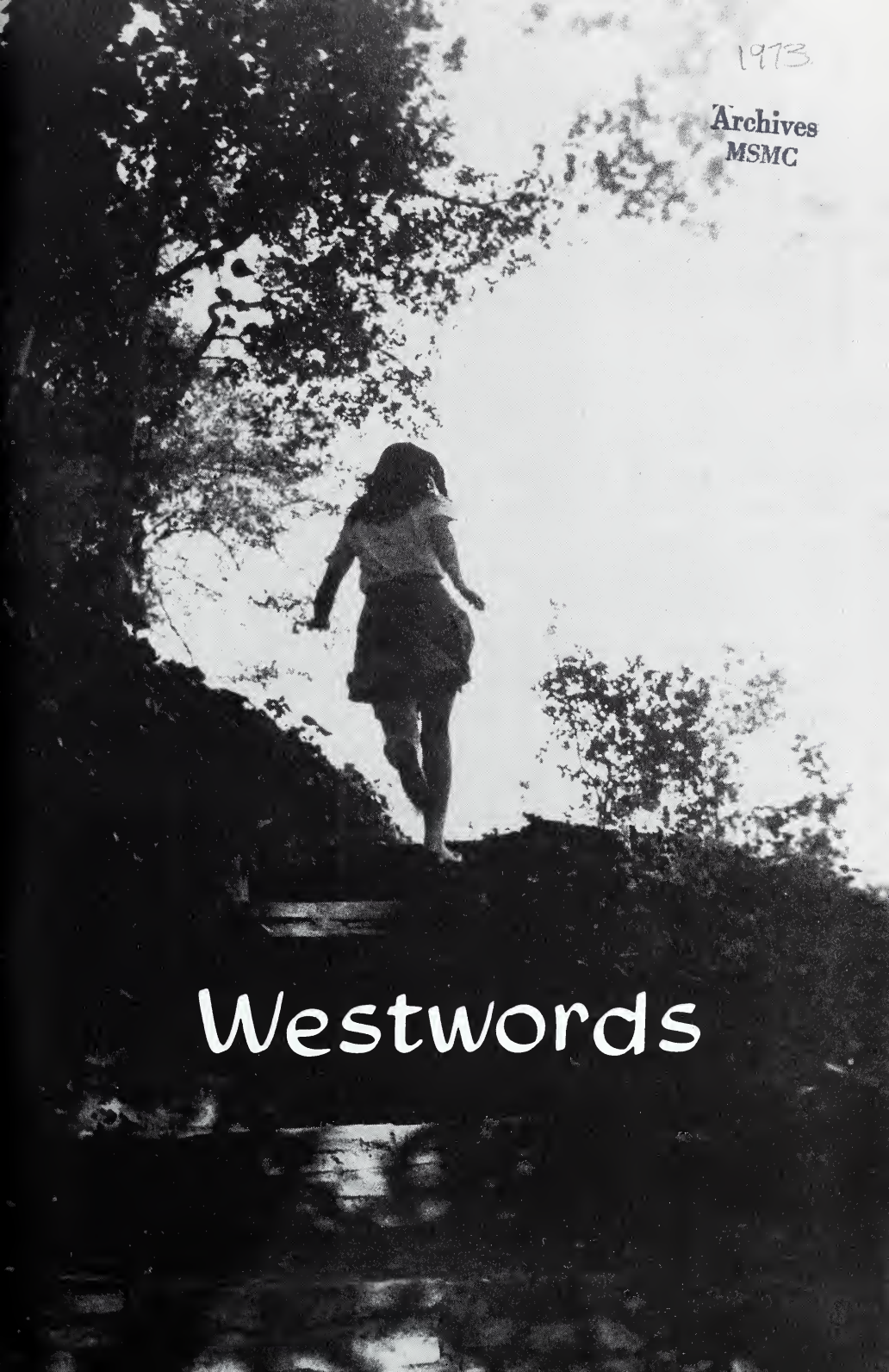

Westwords

Volume I, Number I
Winter, 1973

Westwords is published by the
students of Mount St. Mary's College,
12001 Chalon Road, Los Angeles, California 90049

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

This issue marks the rebirth of *Westwords,* the collected works of students at Mount St. Mary's College. In bringing *Westwords* alive again after three years, the artists and writers have sought to infuse a sense of life, or renewal, into their art.

Editorial board members, students and faculty, read and judged the entries with the writers remaining anonymous. Our contributors range from freshmen in English 1A to a graduate student who teaches high school English; from sisters of three orders to married women who have returned to college. Yet all of these writers and artists symbolize the feeling of vitality at our school in this first month of a new year.

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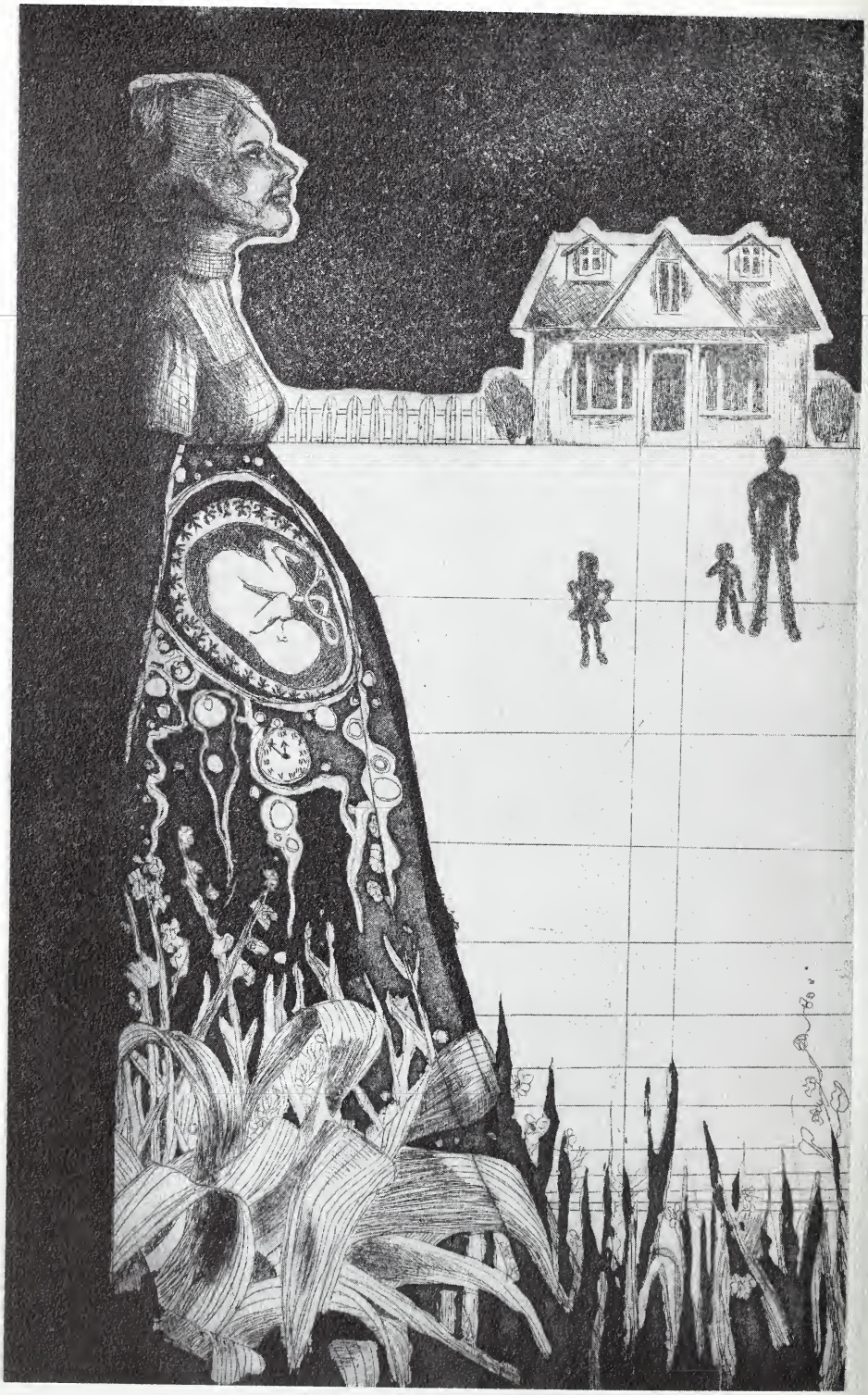

Carmen Yanez

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Letter to a Soldier

teary night
I woke up too soon,
shivered in the cold
(though it wasn't)
choked back sobs so the
ghosts would never hear
and you know
I miss you.

Did you know
Last night
when I left my window
opened to the full
bright moon
I almost wished
(as I pulled the sash)
I'd find you looking in,
Laughter in your eyes
Love in your voice
with me to laugh and love with you
And you know
I miss you.

LINDA DELL HESCH

The Day the Painter Fell
(with echoes of "The Night the Bed Fell")

I suppose that the high point of my summer of '71 was the day the painter fell. It makes a better recitation (unless, as some of my friends have said, one has heard it five or six times) than it does a piece of writing. For the dramatic effects of flying arms, tangled legs and flattened plants lend atmosphere and verisimilitude to what is a somewhat incredible tale.

One hot afternoon my mother said to my father, "Rodney, why don't you paint the house." Since he never answered any of her home improvements edicts, he made no exception now. And since she never waited for any audible response, she bought five gallons of beige Latex house paint. Color didn't pose a problem. The house had been pink, she didn't like yellow, white was blah, green was the color of the neighbor's house (she didn't like the neighbor's taste) and any other color was "out of the question." When my father saw the paint cans he opposed the notion strongly but briefly:

"The house doesn't need to be painted again so soon."

"Is ten years soon?"

He was an intelligent man and knew the outcome of stubbornness and didn't like cold dinners. And so in the end there was no dissuading him: the house must be painted. My mother's strategy in choosing the proper location for the two-ladder-board apparatus during the initial stages of this project had much to do with originating and strengthening his optimism. Aware of his fondness for friendly chat, she placed the ladders at the northwest side of the house. This area faces, at an obtuse angle, the sidewalk where men, women and children, dogs and cats and on Saturdays a leashed pigeon walk by on their way to the local supermarket. In this particular spot my father would be able to make his debut to the acclamation and approval of neighbors and strangers alike. The moral support, friendly persuasion and paid encouragement he received would overcome initial inertia and propel motion in the direction of progress. In three days,

the middle-aged Tom Sawyer completed all the painting within the 180-degree angle of frontal coverage. On the fourth day, he reached the southwest section of the back of the house. Now the only way he could see the neighbors and passers-by was by leaning backwards at an angle complementary to the house; and although he could see the neighbors, the neighbors could not see him and that was four-thirds of the fun. He became depressed and the depression moved into despair and the despair nudged disgust. His pace slackened, his strokes streaked and his brush stiffened. Progress stopped!

At this crucial point my mother used some reverse psychology. She opened the back door (so my father could hear her) and phoned Doris. She told Doris that "Rodney would be finished by this evening." Doris must have doubted the fact because my mother repeated the statement and in a louder voice invited Doris over that evening to see for herself. If there was one person my father disliked more than Doris it was her husband Harvey and if Doris was coming over it meant that the magna vox was coming too.

Before I could witness the instant self-destruction of my father, I decided to roll up my backyard sunbathing towel and take a shower. As I rolled, I watched him drag the two ladders and board around the final corner of the house. The paint can, mixing stick, assorted brushes and paint tray rattled like the garbage disposal he had repaired. Since I had helped my mother plant the vegetable garden at the side of the house I knew that he'd have to clear a place for the ladders in between the rows of green peppers and radishes. It was a good thing we'd planted the radishes and peppers in the first three rows closest to the house and that the eight foot tall tomato plants were closer to the fence. Those plants were the talk of the neighborhood. When they'd been two or maybe three feet tall they'd been held up by wooden stakes. Now they kind of supported one another by group strangulation. So far there hadn't been any tomatoes. Father said that if by some quirk of nature one had grown, it would have been the most expensive tomato in Southern California and it would have been necessary to chop down all the other plants in order to harvest that one tomato.

I had just collected my beach towel and iodine-oil tanning solution when my father sneezed. We'd been trained to brace the china cupboard and hold the Waterford crystal when that emergency situation occurred. Having been well trained, I dropped everything and headed for the house when I realized that my father had priority over clay and silicone. Mid-step I changed directions and raced toward him.

I'm not sure what the downward velocity of a falling painter should be and my physics isn't up to the calculations but I arrived in time to see him fall and too late to do anything about it. His flailing arms and legs disappeared completely. Trying to reach him was useless; the plants formed an impenetrable photosynthetic wall. I called, "Dad, dad!" but there was no answer,

so I raced toward the house yelling "Mom, mom." She met me at the back screen door with the Waterford decanter in her hand. When she saw my face she summed up the situation and raced to the garden. She cried "Rodney, are you okay?" three times before I noticed her tears. Then I started sobbing and imagining the next day's headlines: Valley Man Stabbed to Death with Tomato Stakes. It wasn't until I smelled the onions she'd been peeling that I stopped crying. In a few seconds father's voice rose from somewhere between the plants asking us "to get the . . . . out of here." Considering his condition the language was mild.

Two hours later he limped into the house, a little greener for the fall. Mother insisted on taking him to the emergency ward at the hospital. He returned bandaged, looking greener than when he'd left. Mother explained that he had broken three ribs. He said nothing but reached awkwardly, like an ossified Egyptian mummy, into his back pocket and set a very small, slightly bruised green tomato on top of the dining table and limped off to bed.

SISTER MARGARET FITZER, S.S.L.

A Separate Peace

What wonder that presence
That silence in what was
Said, now filling the moment
With challenge: the
Emptiness of the abyss between

What we saw: bread-
Loaf rocks and cloud
Sculpture, muted
Moon, distant deserts
And valleys (ant hills),

And where we sat: up
Where yes was warm
Silence in the rage of awe
Cold wind; where stretched
Still on a high plateau

We received return of deep
Breath, surrendered (gladly) to
Reach and grope of arms and legs
For ledges (however slight)
On the long climb

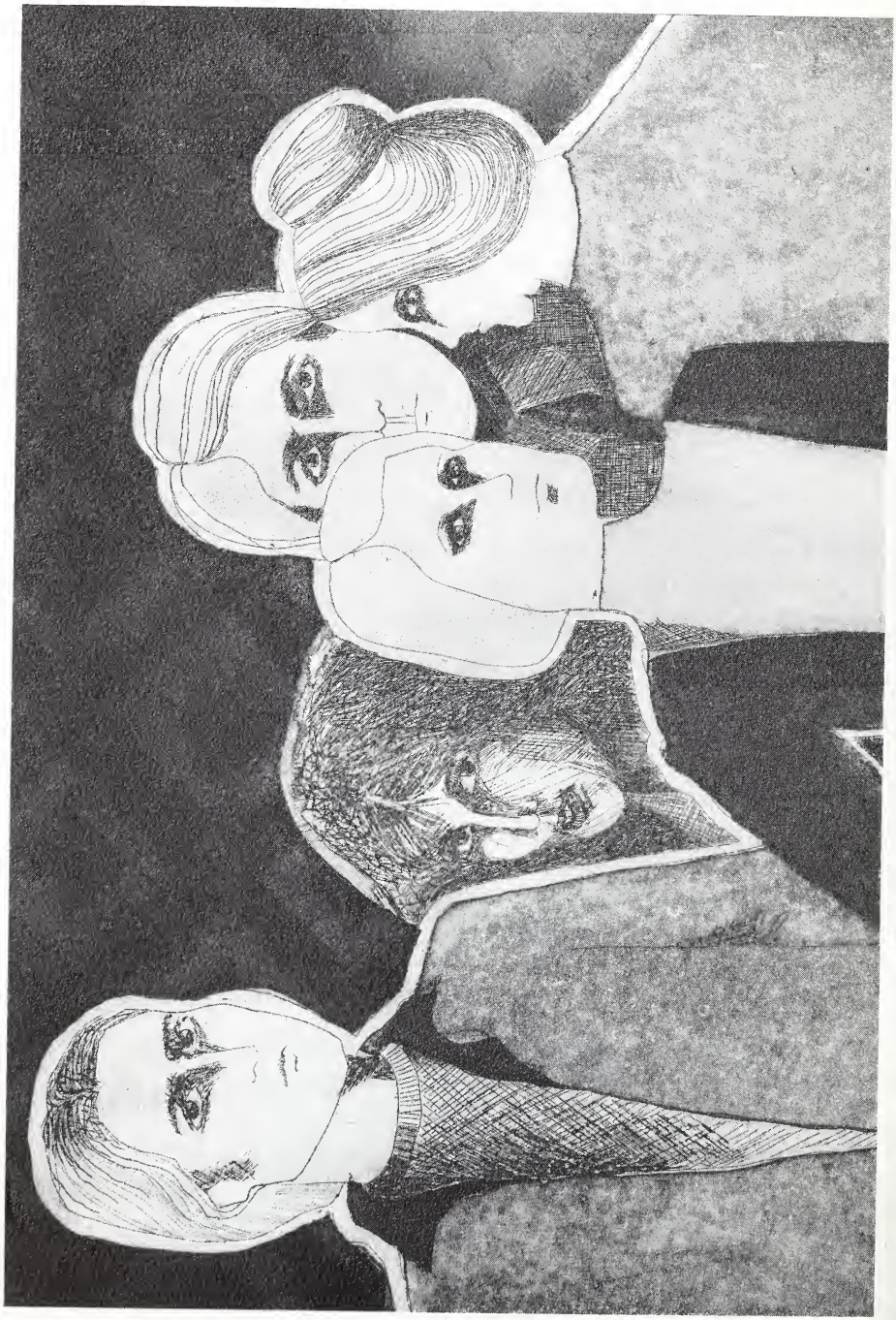
Up. And having found we still
Seek caves that dare a finished
Peace, and looking up
Discover sky through a
Narrow crevasse of separate

Rocks, so ragged that
Coming down, palms burn
Raw until soothed in
Snow-patches beneath limbs
Of decaying trees: stark

Paradoxes of serene wildness.
The lizard looks (not dead,
But) still and cholla spikes
Glisten, (as I remember,
Humble and grateful) before

That light: this presence
Wild and gentle, now felt
Marrow deep though
Gone. And even the wind blows
Quiet here.

SISTER NOREEN O'BRIEN, C.S.J.



Carmen Yanez

The Wall

The portrait of a girl's growth to maturity is shown to us in Ezra Pound's "The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter." Through glimpses of their childhood days, of their brief life together as man and wife, and of their separation we can see the development of the girl into woman. This growth, as revealed by the young Chinese wife in a letter to her husband, is symbolized by the image of the wall that runs throughout the poem. The wall and the gates in the wall represent the security that encloses childhood and that must be abandoned by the mature woman. The imagery of the wall in this poem is used to represent the five phases of the girl's development.

The poem begins by describing the childhood world of the girl and the boy. The young wife remembers the things she and the boy did when they were children.

> While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead
> I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.
> You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,
> You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.

In making reference to "the front gate" the girl implies the presence of a wall. We don't know if she is inside the wall and he outside, but it is suggested that this is the case by the phrase, "You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse." That this wall surrounds the children can be seen in their activities. She "played about the front gate, pulling flowers," he "walked about my seat, playing with blue plums." In relating these childish pursuits the letter is telling us that she remembers their childhood as being safe and secure. The wall that shelters their innocent games is symbolic for the wall that safeguards their childhood. They are happy and content inside their wall and they are not yet ready to change it.

In the first stanza, the presence of the gate suggests that the girl will leave the wall of childhood. In the next part she does just that, but the wall is changed for another. This section describes that change.

At fourteen I married My Lord you,
I never laughed, being bashful.
Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.
Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.

The change in wall occurs because she "married My Lord you." She goes out the "gate" of childhood and is surrounded by the wall of her husband. In leaving the place of her childhood, she enters into a new place, the home of her husband. His wall now encircles her world. He becomes her shield against the dangers of life and she accepts him as such. By performing a gesture indicating respect and acquiescence she adopts this new wall. "Lowering my head I looked at the wall." She will not retreat to the safety of childhood now. "Called to a thousand times, I never looked back." She is ready to change her physical wall of security for an emotional one.

In the next stanza, we realize that the transition from physical to emotional world has been completed. Now, at fifteen, she begins to love.

At fifteen I stopped scowling,
I desired my dust to be mingled with yours
Forever and forever and forever.
Why should I climb the lookout?

Her developing love for her husband and her desire for the safety of his love is seen in the lines, "I desired my dust to be mingled with yours / Forever and forever and forever." Now that she has his protection physically and emotionally is anything else necessary? She asks the question, "Why should I climb the lookout? " A lookout implies looking over a wall. She is secure within the wall of her marriage and so, she doesn't have to go up to the lookout to watch for him. Being safe and happy inside, she has not yet gained the courage of self-confidence.

There is a change in the next stanza. There is no wall here and focus is placed on "you," her husband.

At sixteen you departed
You went into far Ku-to-yen, by the river of
swirling eddies,
And you have been gone five months.
The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.
You dragged your feet when you went out.

The repetition of these phrases, "You departed," "You went into far Ku-to-yen," "You dragged your feet," represent the fact that another person is becoming more important to the girl than herself. Her husband goes out of the walled protection of their home and of their marriage. She is left behind, still inside, not yet brave enough to venture out after him. Her mention of the "swirling eddies" indicates her concern for his safety and so, now, she must climb the

lookout to watch for his return. Her maturity is developing through her love for her husband.

This maturity destroys the need for a wall. The gate is referred to again in the last stanza. She is ready to approach the gate now and leave her wall of security.

> By the gate now, the moss is grown, the
> different mosses,
> Too deep to clear them away!

Since she has found security within herself through her love for another she no longer needs a wall nor a gate to shield her from the business of life. Her husband has not yet returned to her. The gate is not used and so, "the different mosses" grow underneath. But, even though the mosses have grown "Too deep to clear them away!," we have the impression that she will open the gate because "the paired butterflies . . . in the west garden . . . hurt me." She doesn't want to be left behind in a safe place. She wants to be with him.

She has grown. Now, she is ready to leave her secure world. Now, worry for his safety, "by the river of swirling eddies" and "through the narrows of the River Kiang," compels her to go out and brave the river. Now, she has the courage to tell her husband,

> If you are coming down through the narrows
> of the River Kiang,
> Please let me know beforehand,
> And I will come out to meet you
> As far as Cho-fu-sa.

The girl no longer has a need for the wall. She has found confidence within herself and within her love for her husband. She has become a woman.

Mr. Pound has provided a subtle guideline in the use of the image of the wall as a symbol for the girl's growth to womanhood. As we have seen, the image of the wall is used in this poem to represent the five phases of the girl's development from childhood to maturity. In finding confidence within herself she ceases to need the protection required by the child and she acquires the ability to love selflessly, to love as a woman. In overcoming insecurity she is ready to go ahead with the business of encountering, and enjoying, life.

MARGARET TALVIN

HAGAR

"Where have you come from and where are you going?"

Gen. 16:7-8

I came to watch the
Happenings on the wall of China
Where they dance with velvet feet on
Its coruscated top and throw
Petals of endurance to the wind.

There isn't much laughter here
Though I saw the word LOVE
In bold letters
Scribbled hastily on a rock
In Chinese, of course.

I thought it might be fun
And I pulled my eyes into slits
Before the mirror, only to find
A surprised face.

I did come such a long way to witness
And now, wouldn't you know,
I miss the ocean.

FRAN GOODMAN

Sister Mary Anncarla

Leave-Taking

For the tenth time in five minutes, I glanced at the clock. I sat at the kitchen table, fidgeting with the napkin set at my place, thinking, Where are you Dad? You said you'd be home early tonight. I'm leaving – remember?

My mother walked into the kitchen with a handful of potatoes. "Honey, why don't you finish packing instead of sitting there staring at the clock? " She began to wash the potatoes at the sink, mechanically scrubbing each one and setting it aside. "You should throw an extra sweater into your travel case. It'll be cold when you land in St. Paul."

"Mother, this is my last day at home; can't I just sit here if I want. Besides, I already packed everything I need. I just have to lock my suitcases."

Mother smiled. "Nan, you know you'll be stuffing things in just before you leave. You and your father – always saving things for the last minute."

That wasn't true. My father's a very organized man. It's just that he takes things easily and calmly – like forgetting appointments. Mother shakes her head at him because she has them all written down in her book. If she were going away to college, she probably would have packed her trunk six weeks ahead of time, and would spend her last few hours at home repainting the hall or baking a chocolate mousse.

"He'll be home any minute now," Mother chattered. "He's probably talking to Mr. Evenston about that trip next week. You know your father – he starts talking to someone and he goes on forever. I know man is a social animal, but your father carries it to extremes."

Mother! I wanted to scream; but I just sat there, folding and refolding the gold napkin. The table looked perfect, with its glittering china on dark linen. Dad once said that Mother would rather earn the *Good Housekeeping* Seal of Approval than the Nobel Peace Prize.

I jumped when the telephone rang. Mother continued stirring the gravy, humming to herself. Lumpless gravy, I thought, as I walked over to the telephone. Picking up the receiver I prayed, Please Dad, don't say you'll be late. "Hello, this is the Miller residence."

"May I speak to Mrs. Miller, please?" The voice was quiet. "Just a moment." I turned; Mother was still stirring her gravy. "She's right here." I held the telephone out to her and she sighed. "It's probably Mrs. Conrad calling about that clothing drive." She walked briskly across the kitchen and sang, "Hello" into the receiver.

I wandered into the living room and plopped on the sofa, sticking one leg under me. When I was little, Mother had told me not to sit that way, or I'd grow into a pretzel. Even then I hadn't believed her; I'd sit like this anyway. I had even jumped on our sofa, until one day it collapsed under me. I had never seen Mother so angry as she was when she found me trying to prop up the broken sofa leg. She exiled me to my room and I complained to Dad when he came home. "It's not fair! It was an accident."

"I think you're a little old to be jumping on sofas," was all he said. I looked out the window where the late summer sun stretched throwing the trees and houses into long shadow. This was the time of evening when Dad and I walked down the street to the cul-de-sac, then across a vacant lot to Bryant Park. When I was little, I remembered, I would struggle to keep up with his long strides, trying not to step on the cracks at the same time. I'd tell him about school and my teachers and my friends and how much I hated Stevie Pettie, who sat next to me. And then when I began to date Steve Pettie in high school, Dad remembered him as the boy I'd hated.

I would miss those evenings, and I knew Dad would too. He enjoyed walking in the dusk, hands in his pockets, whistling off key. Once we hiked all the way to Greenfield Park and back – that's seven miles – and Dad told me about the autumns in New Hampshire. "Nannie, the trees there change to colors you can't name, 'cause you've never seen them. And in the morning the air is so icy that it hurts to breathe. I used to walk to school every morning and –"

I giggled suddenly. "Yeah, Dad, ten miles in the rain and snow."

He reached to tug my ponytail, grinning. "I was going to say, before you butted in, that every morning I'd walk past the offices of a lumber company, and I'd see the boss, in his shiny car and dark business suit, unlock the office door and start moving all those trees around. And I promised myself that someday I'd be –"

I interrupted him again. "But Daddy, he wasn't moving trees – the lumberjacks did that." He shook his head and smiled again. "Besides, you've got a shiny car now, and you wear a suit every day."

We walked a little farther before he answered, "Yes, Nan, but I miss the trees."

We turned the corner and saw our house. There was Mother on the front porch, calling, "Hurry up! Dinner's ready!" She always waited dinner for us.

I got up from the sofa and walked back to the kitchen. Mother had hung up the phone and was standing with her back to me. She looked different, and I realized

suddenly how much she had aged in these past few years. As she turned around I saw her face, drawn with wrinkles, and her hair, gray-streaked; she looked almost middle-aged. "That was the Highway Patrol, Nan. They said —" She couldn't seem to get the words out. "Your father has been in an automobile accident. He was hit by a drunk driver."

I stared at her. "Well how is he?"

"They don't know. That was the Highway Patrol," she repeated. "They took him to St. Mary's Hospital. Maybe we'd better . . ." She walked slowly out of the kitchen. "I'll get my purse."

I stood, hearing her heels click as she walked into the bedroom. Dad . . . in the hospital. All this time I'd been sitting here, remembering our times together. I sat down. He'll be all right, I told myself. Nothing can happen to him.

Mother returned to the kitchen. "Are you coming, Nan?"

I stood up, "Of course, Mother."

The hospital was about five miles away, but at this hour there would be traffic. We got into the car quickly, Mother driving. As we backed out into the street she told me, "They said the car wasn't too badly wrecked . . . perhaps your father isn't badly hurt either." She spoke calmly, but as she turned the wheel I noticed that her hands shook.

I couldn't say anything. I stared straight ahead for the next mile or so, neither of us speaking. Then I reached over to turn on the radio. "Please, Nan, do we have to listen to that music now?" My hand fell back in my lap. I glanced at her. She looked at the road, her chin quivering.

"Okay, Mother," Oh God, don't let her cry, I prayed. One of us has to be composed.

I realized the last time I had seen her cry had been the night of my grandfather's death four years ago. Aunt Sarah had called in the early evening, and Mother and Dad had left me alone while they drove to the hospital. Just like this, I thought. But there was a difference — my grandfather was old when he died. Dad was still young, and I couldn't think about death for him. Yesterday he and I had taken our last walk down to the park and thrown the football around for a while.

"Nan," my mother said suddenly, looking behind her before changing lanes, "you'll have to take another plane, maybe tomorrow."

"That's all right - classes don't start for a week."

"But you wanted to be there for orientation. And your registration — what will you do now?"

"I'll manage." I slouched into the seat.

The ride seemed to take hours. Finally we reached the hospital. Mother drove to the side, parked, and we hurried to the emergency room. A nurse explained that Dad's accident had been serious, he had lost a lot of blood, and a doctor was preparing to operate. Would Mrs. Miller please fill out some forms for the hospital? Mother sat down and picked up a pen, and I walked over to a chair against the wall. I picked up

a magazine and began to leaf through it.

After several minutes, Mother joined me. She dropped her purse and smoothed her skirt; I noticed her hands trembling again as she sat down. "I think everything will be all right, Nan." She looked at me as if she wanted reassurance that, yes, everything would be all right.

In the background, I could hear a nasal voice over the loudspeaker: "Dr. Harshaw, Dr. Harshaw." Mother ran her hand through her hair, then stopped with a nervous motion. She leaned over, digging through her purse to find a comb. "Dr. Harshaw," the loud-speaker blared again. She looked up. "That's the doctor who's going to do the operation."

"I've never heard of him," I said shortly.

Mother turned to me. "Oh, I have. Mrs. Mellone told me he's one of the finest surgeons . . ." Her voice trailed off as a tall, gray-haired man approached us.

"Mrs. Miller? I'm Dr. Harshaw. Your husband is in critical condition and we'd like your permission to operate."

She nodded slightly. "Oh, please tell us how it's going, Doctor, when you start."

"We really can't tell now," he said, "it can go either way." A nurse called to him; he turned and left the room.

I went back to my magazine and Mother found her comb. The next hour crawled as we tried to read. We didn't exchange a word. I kept thinking, for some reason, of the autumns in New Hampshire, and wondering if Dad would ever get back there. He hadn't travelled much since he and Mother were married; she'd rather settle in one place. But he had dreams of moving around, of seeing new places, and, of course, of going back home. Weren't Mother and I "home" to him? I wondered. I remembered the times he had walked into the house to find her in tears and me storming out the back door. Or the arguments we had started at dinner. It wasn't very pleasant for any of us.

Mother cut into my thoughts. "Maybe you can take another plane out tomorrow or Sunday. But the airport is so crowded on weekends."

"Mother, it doesn't matter," I protested. "Let's just wait, and see what happens. Then I can decide about school."

She stared at me. "But honey, there's no question about your going. You know it's what your father wants." I pictured him the day I got my letter of acceptance, and the smile that had lit his face when I told him. He had stood up and hugged me. "I'm gonna miss you, Nan, But I know this is what you want." He glanced at Mother and added, "And you know it's what your mother and I want for you."

Now she was saying, "No matter what happens, Nan, I want you to go to school. Perhaps you'll be a week or so late, but you just can't waste this opportunity. Just like Mother, I thought, to be concerned with educational opportunities at a time like this. Then I thought: if Dad dies, Mother will be alone. What would she do? Go back to the gardening she had neglected, redecorate the house, join a few more clubs? I pictured her cooking dinner for herself and sitting alone at night, crocheting or watch-

ing TV. I'd come home at holidays and we'd clean the yard together or maybe even walk down to the park. Does Mother like to walk?

I looked at her. She leaned back, rubbing her eyes, probably, I thought, still worried about my flight. "Maybe I shouldn't go to college," I blurted.

Her eyes were red and puffy when she opened them. I thought she would argue, but she only asked, "Is that what you want?"

I hadn't expected that. "No, I – I think I'd rather go to school, but maybe I should –" My words fell over each other.

"If you're worried about me –" Then she stopped too. "Thank you," she said, and I saw the tears in her eyes. She bent her head with a kind of laugh. "Oh dear, here I am sobbing again. I don't know what's wrong with me." She dabbed at her eyes with a Kleenex.

She didn't want me to see her cry. It was the way she hated for us to see the lumps in her gravy or the appointments she forgot.

"I'll be all right," she said, as she pulled another Kleenex out of her purse. "But maybe you could stay – for a while."

She looked at me and suddenly I wanted to cry, too. I thought, Oh, please Dad, don't die. I want you to see my mother cry. All these years I hadn't known she could. Now I saw her through my own tears.

Then I saw Dr. Harshaw walking towards us. I hesitated, then reached for her hand. "Mom," I said, "the doctor's here."

ANGELA KUCIA

Thirteen Ways of Looking At An Egg

I. Smooth, silent womb of white,
Inscrutable
Unblemished
Prison of privacy,
The egg waits to be liberated.

II. Humpty Dumpty
fell from my hands, unsuspecting –
but I cringed, knowing.

III. Churned to froth,
the waves lifted high their peaks –
egg whites beaten
to a stiff meringue.

IV. Uncertainty is
wondering,
will the egg I crack be
Hard-cooked,
or raw?

V. In a cardboard barracks
One dozen eggshell-helmeted soldiers
Stand at attention.

VI. Say not: which came first, chicken or egg?
Say rather: which will last?

VII. Two fried eggs stare up at me
above a Mona-Lisa smile of bacon,
as if to challenge
my cannibalism.

VIII. Golden sun-yolk
Suspended in albumen-orbit,
Ringed by a calcium-constellation
Is a universe.

IX. Scrambled (confused)
Hard-boiled (tough)
Framed (gullible)
Over Easy (sensitive)
Sunny-Side-Up (optimistic)
The many moods of the egg.

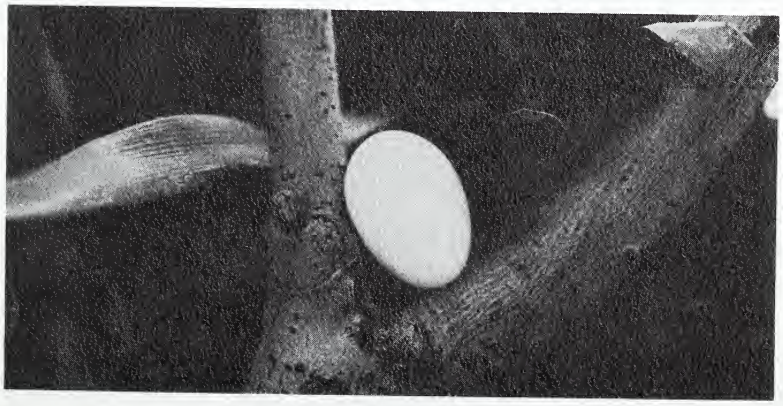
X. Saw-teeth tear the air
as the broken eggshell gapes
Open,
Empty.

XI. Gaudy tints of Easter-egg dye,
Nests of synthetic grass,
Profusion of sugar-coated impostors,
Peter Rabbit's prodigies.

XII. Carrying its atomic message,
The mother-bird of man's invention
Lays its sterilizing egg of destruction
In the mane of peace.

XIII. Peck . . . peck-peck . . . crack
Flutter . . . cheep . . .
Easter happens every day.

SISTER MARY JO BECK, S.S.L.



Carmen Yanez

The Paper Cup

"Whew, I just made it!"

The chunky, bushy haired man clung to the handrail. With much effort he pulled himself onto the high, black steps of the moving train. It was some moments before he was able to push the heavy door open. Stepping into the safety of the car, he was tossed from side to side as he made his way down the narrow aisle of the coach. A rush of air and sound burst upon him as he opened the exterior door leading from the coach to the lounge. Once inside the lounge, he scanned it.

"Good, the car is empty."

He sought a secluded corner, eased himself into a black over-stuffed chair, and threw his feet onto the hassock. Then he laid his head back and sighed deeply. Slowly the tension of the morning left him. Withdrawing his flat-bowled pipe from the left pocket of his hand-tailored suede jacket, he knocked it gently against the palm of his hand, gave it a testing suck and blow; then filled it. After wafting the fragrant tobacco for a moment, he lit it. The blue-gray smoke rose slowly – up and around, circling, waiting, hanging, then rushing and disappearing.

. . . Where – where does it go?. . .

"Would you like something to drink, sir?"

"Yes, I'll have some anisette."

His eyes continued to follow the smoke.

. . . Where does it go ? If only I could disappear as easily as the smoke – the gentle, sweet, blue smoke . . .

"Your drink, sir."

"Thank you; keep the change."

The drink tasted flat and bitter, but it was better than the foul taste he had in his mouth. He took a few more sips, then limply rested the drink on the broad arm of the chair. As soon as he closed his eyes, his mind drifted helplessly back to the events of the morning.

The autumn air had been fragrant with the scent of the park's many spruce and pine trees. The hills and lawns were arrayed in strong, soft, earth colors and dabbed with the bright reds and yellows of fallen leaves. It was a bucolic scene of peace and beauty.

While seated on a bench, he had been intently watching two doves drink from the near-by pond and had not noticed the formless, gray figure move beside him. A chill came over him as a sudden icy gust rippled the pond and frightened off the birds. A feeling caused him to turn toward the mist-like figure. He tried to bring the blurred form into focus, but his eyes were held captive by those of the stranger.

. . . Those eyes – black, yet glowing red, unwavering in their cold stare, yet brimming with the tears of all mankind. Eyes – sneering at the fleeting moment, yet reflecting the depth of eternity. Those eyes – glowing, staring, crying . . .

Rocked by the train, his head swayed back and forth, around and down. His full lips formed the words,

. . . Death – the eyes of death . . .

A tap on his shoulder startled him.

"Your ticket, sir?"

He rubbed his eyes in an effort to realize where he was.

"My ticket? I don't have one. Can I give you the money and buy one now? "

"Where do you wish to go? "

"Lugano."

"From Montagnola to Lugano is 300 lire."

He put his hand into his left breast pocket. His wallet wasn't there. He grunted as he drew his feet down. Clasping both arms of the large chair, he pushed himself up. Methodically he searched his jacket pockets from left to right, inside and out, then his trouser pockets front and back.

"Well, sir?"

"I just had my wallet a few moments ago when I paid the waiter for my drink."

"You must be mistaken, sir. The only waiters we have are in the dining car. There are no drinks served on this train."

"But look! There is my glass."

He swung his arm around and knocked the paper cup half filled with water from the arm of the chair to the floor. He watched the water run and drip.

. . . Drip – down – down . . .

He touched the wet blackness; he let a drop fall into the palm of his hand, then pressed it to his lips. He picked up the white paper cup and crushed

it in his hand. Looking up from his bent position, he saw the conductor staring at him. His dark blue uniform began to blur into a mist. Burning red-black eyes held him. He struggled to look away. If only he could look away, he'd be able to run.

. . . Run – he had to run . . .

"Help! Help!"

The scream remained soundless on his moving lips. His heart was beating, beating so hard he could no longer hear his own inner cry for help. The pounding became unbearable. It moved from his chest into his throat. He could feel it pulsing into his ears – throbbing in his fingertips. Then slowly – ever so slowly – the glowing red eyes began to spin. They went round and round; they drifted and faded – farther and farther into the distant blackness – the silent – eternal – blackness.

"Yes, Officer, I did try to awake him, but I couldn't. I shook him. I sponged his face with water, and I tried to give him a drink from my flask. Once or twice I thought he was coming around. His hands quivered and jerked; his lips even moved, but I couldn't hear what he was saying. I tried to lift his eyelids, but he started breathing real hard and that was the end."

The officer finished writing his report, placed the notebook in his pocket and motioned for the attendants. As they lifted the body off the park bench onto the stretcher, a crumpled water cup fell from the hand. The icy wind tossed it by the water's edge. A dove pecked at it; then flew away.

SISTER TERESA MARGARET DITTAVIO, O.C.P.

Rise and Fall

There was once a spider, like any other spider, who thought he was better than anyone because he boasted eight spindly legs. This bothered the other spiders, but they decided to humor him because they figured he would end up in the funny farm sooner or later anyway. So he went about flaunting himself and claiming to be king because of his eight legs. All of the other lowly insects believed him of course (he had such a way with words), and were willing to do anything he asked. As a result, he commanded a vast army of other creatures and soon took over the whole bug world, Then, looking up at the human beings, he thought "Why don't I conquer them? Surely if I can conquer ants (who have three times as many legs), I can conquer man!"

The very next day, he set out with a vast army of regulars to make war with the humans. But as they assembled in a great mass, a group of school children dashed over them in a game and squashed every last one of them.

moral: It doesn't matter what kind of brains you got;
if you ain't, you ain't.

LINDA DELL HESCH

The Man and the Tree

The man drove along in his shiny black limousine, already regretting this side trip. He asked his companion, "Why go see a tree? There are plenty of important things to do." His companion reasoned they were in the area and the tree was there.

It stood, its branches grasping out to hold the sky in place. The Man kicked at the ground and turned to his companion, "How many board feet of lumber in this thing? All high grade? " He pushed back his hat and squinted up through the branches. A voice came crashing thunderously from the sky, "Moses crossed the Red Sea and I was a sprouting seed. Where were you? " The man turned a startled face and his companion said, "Sounds to me like it's comin' on to storm!"

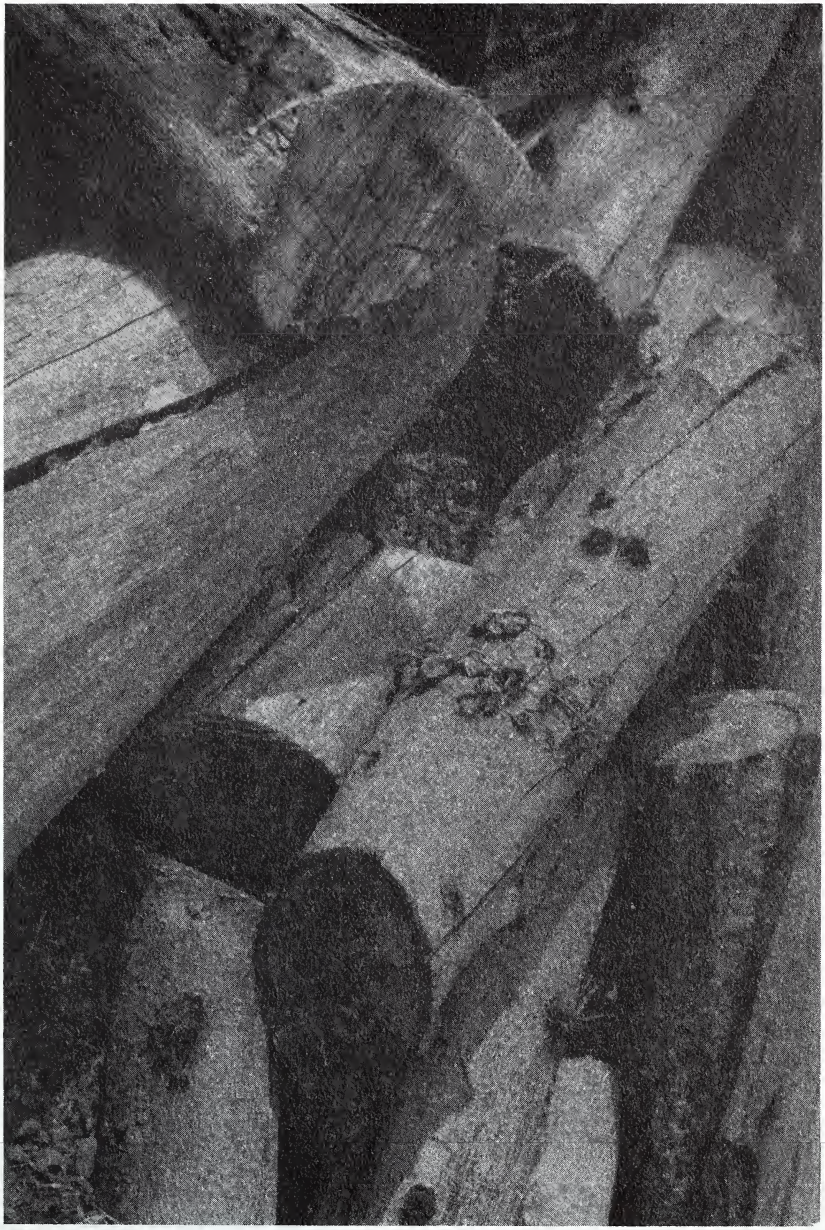
"The Punic Wars raged on and I was putting out my first branches. A man called Alexander nearly conquered the world. He came and went and still I stood."

The Man shouted up at the tree, "I can buy and sell whole countries!" and his companion handed him a flask and said, "It's time you had another drink. I'll drive."

"Fire and flood left their scars upon my trunk, but still I reached out for the sky. Man, like the ant, comes and goes. They have many things in common. I have observed much in the last three thousand years, and I will observe more in the next three thousand. Where shall you be, O Man-ant?"

The Man stood motionless, staring up. His companion took his arm, "We'd better get started, all this silence can really get to you after a while. Come on, we've got a long way to go." The Man turned away slowly. "Yes, we've got a long way to go."

CHRISTINE JAKUBOWSKI



Catherine Scheibe

Two Poems

Anniversary Song

We got married in a dying garden,
Then went to Charlie's pad where
We got drunk with our friends on three-two beer.
I was pregnant and we were scared.
Waved good-bye to children sick on the porch,
Drove down Route 68 in a borrowed car.
Three days in bed with a pound of Ritz
Crackers at the Dayton Biltmore
Left a rice-crumb trail from bed to door.
All that cold winter we grew and knew
Of love and meatloaf until through
A growing garden I walked with our son.
Quiet now we sip champagne and remember
And know where we will be next September.

Catherine Scheibe

Triad for my Sister

I saw your eyes and
Knew even before you
Sat two coffee cups

Away and told me
Twisting your unringed
Finger while the children

Opened the door and
Closed us till they had
Snacks and returned to

Sesame Street. And when you
Cried, I filled your cup with
Words like why not visit

Acapulco on your vacation or
Make some macrame or
Isn't there anyone at the

Bank? And I will look for
Single men and you will
Still have a baby. It's not

Too late and all the
Lies a safe woman tells an
Unhappy one. But I

Cried too. Until after you
Left I looked out my gingham
Window to see

My husband leaning in your open
Window to say hello.

ELAINE BERMAN

Thursday's Tear

The young child sat restlessly on the large, brown pew and listened to the words being echoed softly from wall to wall. It seemed like any other Sunday Mass, only this was Thursday.

Every few minutes she would jump from her seat and turn to glance at the many different colored clothes, and then slip quickly into thought . . . Someday I'll be big enough to wear a big, black, feather-filled hat like my old friend, Mrs. Thomson . . .

She lifted a piece of paper from the shelf in the pew ahead of her and tapped her mother softly on the shoulder. "Mommy, Mother!" Tired of waiting for a response, the child opened her mother's purse and began searching for a pencil. After inspecting most of the articles in the black treasure bag, she found a small, green pencil. The one her mother always uses for the grocery list.

Time seemed to pass slowly for her, like Saturday afternoons when she sat on the sofa, green grass in her front yard, anxiously awaiting the arrival of Korky, the neighborhood ice-cream man . . . Daddy always buys me an ice-cream cone on Saturday, I wonder where the man with the box is . . . She knew she hadn't missed him though . . . Mommy always gives me money to put in the box. But when Daddy brings me, he gives me more . . .

The room was filled with silence as the child moved slowly to kneel next to her mother. But finding that she could not see over the pew ahead of her, she decided to stand on the small cushioned kneeler. Her blue eyes roamed slowly across the large church walls, staring innocently at the many colorful pictures. Those same eyes were suddenly captured by the life-sized figure, left hanging on a large wooden cross behind the altar. Perhaps it was the reflection of the light on his face, or maybe the artistic work of the sculptor that left a tear in his eye, but the child waited for the moment when that tear would fall from his eye and roll slowly down his tan-colored cheek . . . Daddy says he's the son of God and he's a good man. Daddy is a good man too . . .

A feeling of sadness seemed to fill her heart, although she didn't really know why. But it was soon forgotten as the priest's last words broke the silence. "May he rest in peace." A tear fell quickly from her mother's eye as the child ended the prayer moments after the others, "Amen."

DEANIE YEAKEL

Clerihews

Dr. Jekyll must have been shy:
Else why
'Til the day he died
Did he hyde?

When Galileo looked at the sky
Through his eye
He knew
He'd get a telescopic view.

You may be sure
That Louis Pasteur
Discouraged microbes and others of their ilk
From congregating in his milk.

Einstein,
Had he been a pupil of mine,
Would never have cared
That $E=mc^2$.

Hippocrates visited a patient's house
And found there a snake and a mouse;
Swearing an oath,
He disposed of them both.

Newton
Knew darn tootin'
If he sat beneath that tree
Something would gravitate upon he.

No scientist since has been greater
Than Alexander Fleming: his Creator,
We're told,
Threw away the mold.

Alfred Lord Tennyson
Had a propensity for venison;
Thus it is clear
Why Victorians held him dear.

NANCY MARJORIE BARNEY

The Spirit Softens Me

The Spirit softens me,
So that I often see creation –
And feel elation at His entirety.

From glory to glory I can be
Flexible in adaptation.
The Spirit softens me.

Living stone to stone, edgeless and openly
Family-flow in love's permeation.
And feel elation at His entirety.

Pure prism and forever free.
Constant in christal realization,
The Spirit softens me.

Together my brothers (and others) see
The light's rising penetration,
And feel elation at His entirety.

Earthen vessel filled for sovereignty,
I can now be creation.
The spirit softens me,
And I feel elation at His entirety.

MELANIE LINK

After "Afterward"
(a poem by Ted Walker)

Afterward, we argue
(You are so like me) and we are back
Into our separate beings.
The car cools, almost violet,

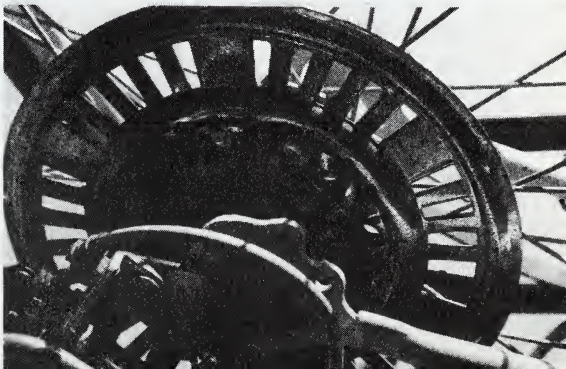
My fingers gripping the wheel.
You sit as if on the edge of an island,
The sun gone, passed your island.
The yellow line is invisible like sunlight.

Oh, the words you threw. I felt them,
Stones falling, softened with use;
But painful; but personal; belonging
To us – and always with us.

As you sat, I gathered them.
You stir. I listen to the world.
A horn-honk, blaring radio;
I remember once finding a hubcap rusted.

You are unresponsive. I should cover
My forbidden skin deep in grease.
I drive you as though you were mine
Forever. Let me hear your motor.

EVE MOBLEY



Marina Kontos

The Museum

Harding Avenue looms brown and black and iron in my memory. The houses were of a similar hue: red brick grown brown and oily, two story, four flat dwellings, some three story, twelve flat dwellings. The stairs sloped and sagged under the weight of their hundred years and the walls, once painted green, were now flecked with the millon drops of rain shaken on them by the tenants' soaked umbrellas. Sometimes the landlord made an attempt to paint the hallway, an occasion of merriment and advice giving. "Green again, Mr. Pozin, uchh, like the old country, you are." "A prison, Mr. Pozin, a prison you got here and we're the honored inmates."

Guffaws followed the insults, but Mr. Pozin nodded his lion head and continued to spread the pea green liquid over the walls.

Our house was halfway up the street. Next door, in the basement window, Mr. Feigen sat sewing. Jenny, his idiot daughter, rocked alongside his machine. Jenny and Mr. Feigen rocked and sewed into my consciousness from its birth, and I was always aware of them. Jenny frightened me, all the children really, with her great pink tongue lolling along her chin and her blank white eyes. When she walked, her thighs scraped together and she knocked from side to side. But she was harmless and when we tired of taunting her, she faded back into the window alongside her father, the tailor. They lived alone, and as far as we knew, depended on nobody for their needs.

Mr. Pozin, the landlord, lived upstairs of our flat. When we made noise, my sisters and brother and I, he would smack a broom against the radiator in a deafening eruption through the pipes. That was our signal to be still but often, my Mother, irate and wearied, would grab her own broom and in a thunderous reprisal, let it fly against the coils. Often their warfare sang into the evening, long past the time we were quiet in our beds.

Our yard had a strip of grass and a few struggling irises that Mrs. Pozin weeded and watered. However long she tended them and with what love, some galoot would invariably trample them, and Mr. Pozin would shriek threats at the gangs of slick-haired boys as they slouched by, heads down, hands in pockets, electric blue pants pegged tightly at the ankles. Occasionally, one of the boys would lift his head, pull his eyes into narrow slits and spit a long shining stream onto the sidewalk in the landlord's direction.

From as early as I could remember, I knew a galoot was a young tough, a punk, someone to avoid, who would be a full hoodlum by the time he stole his first car. My parents often yelled that we were galoots when we didn't obey. If we weren't galoots at the moment, we could be by the next day. Our metamorphosis was remarkably swift, depending on the degree of our misbehavior, from galoot to full-fledged murderer.

Mother was in the kitchen when I slammed into the house. She was coring apples.

"Hi."

"Hello," she nodded. "School?"

"Fine, Ma."

"Hungry?"

"No, not really, Ma, tomorrow is no school and Reevee's mother is taking her to the museum. She said it would be all right if Sonny and I come along. Is it okay with you?"

"Who's taking you?" she asked again.

"Reevee's mother; you know – my friend."

"Oh, yes, the dentist's niece."

"Ma, can we go?"

"I suppose. You always want to run around, never stay home, a summer-girl, you are."

She dropped the last apple in the pan of water, spraying the sink and wall above the rusty faucets. Turning to look at me, her worn out brown eyes held a fear of the street, what it would do to us if she didn't watch us every minute.

A dull blade of anger pierced my head. I never went anywhere. Why did she always say things like that? Any time I asked to go somewhere, she automatically said no. Sometimes she might ask again where it was I wanted to go, but not often. So, I just got used to staying around the neighborhood. Once a year she took us downtown to Marshall Field's where we looked in the decorated Christmas windows. Those were magic winter nights, riding the El to State Street, straining against her pulling hand, straining to fly down the El stairs, to the windows, lighted, filled with fairy stories: Cinderella holding the glass slipper filled with precious jewels. The three bears opening red and green boxes, covers lifted, frozen. Frozen, forever, in my mind.

Rare Sundays, half years separating them from each other, my father would announce that "we're going to the beach." He worked fourteen hours a day at the store. "For you," he said, "your future," but we didn't understand. Going to the beach meant getting our tennis shoes on, covering our legs with long pants, carrying extra shirts to protect our arms and squashing over all this bulk a large-brimmed aging straw hat. It meant boiling dozens of eggs, buying a loaf of 'sandwich' bread, filling brown soggy sacks with warming pop bottles. It meant a long, hot ride on the Jackson Boulevard bus, wind whipping our faces, to the end of the line where the water lapped nearly to the shore. It meant an endless "be careful," "the water's too cold," "don't go in the water, you wanta drown?" "watch out, there's glass in the sand." "are you hungry?" "eat! eat! eat!" "cover your head, you'll get sunstroke." "you'll go in the water after lunch." But after lunch we had to wait a half hour and then it was getting too cold to go in the water and besides, "you call this filthy hole a beach?"

"Mother, can I go to the Museum? I'll take Sonny."

"You'll take me where?" Sonny said, suddenly appearing in the kitchen.

I looked at my younger sister. I still see her as she watched me then. Yellow eyes, pale skin, nervous twitch pulling at her lip, Sonny, my tagalong, my faithful slave, my nemesis, my adoring fan, more mine than my mother's.

Cold, windy nights, she often tiptoed to my bed.

"Gypsy, I'm scared."

"Sh-h-h, get in with me, don't wake the others."

"I was dreaming of robbers."

"Sonny, sh-h-h, you can sleep with me."

She huddled against my arm, trembling but soon slept as the warmth spread over her.

"You'll take me where?" she repeated.

"To the Museum. Wanta go? The Museum of Science and Industry."

"Oh wow! Where they have the coal mines?" I nodded. Her eyes shone with the wonder of what she had heard about the coal mines. A long, scary elevator ride DOWN below the earth to where a mine really worked, real men wearing lights on their caps chipped real coal.

"Oh, Mother, could we, please, please?"

That night we went to bed early to make the time seem shorter til morning. I listened to my heart thumping until sleep enclosed my worry like the shadow of a dark bird.

Mother made lunches, we gulped our orange juice and ate the Farina without shuddering. Mother's applecake was marvelous but her Farina barely resembled food. That morning, though, it didn't matter.

"Where're you meeting Reevee's mother?" she asked.

"At their house."

She kissed us. "Okay, kids, be careful and be polite." She handed me carfare and an extra quarter for ice-cream.

On the street, the houses were still silent, except the Persians! Their windows were open, wide as usual, and from inside came the radio beat of Gene Krupa's drum, and the heavy, acrid odor of curry powder and mustard and something I couldn't identify.

We walked toward the bus.

"Sonny."

"What?"

"Sonny, if I tell you something, swear to God you won't ever tell Mother. Do you swear?"

"I don't know, what is it?"

"Reevee's not coming with us."

"Why?"

"Because I made that up. She was never coming, but I knew Mother wouldn't let us go alone, so I made it up."

"She'll kill us."

"Not if she doesn't know."

"Gypsy, she knows everything."

"She won't know this unless you tell her. Swear to God."

"I'm afraid. We'll get lost."

"Don't be stupid. How can you get lost in Chicago? Everybody knows where the Museum of Science and Industry is. Please, Sonny, swear."

"Okay, God will strike me dead if I ever tell her."

We dashed the last few yards as the bus approached. We jumped on, paid a dime and a nickel and asked for transfers. Just to be sure, I asked the bus driver to let us off at the El station, the one that connected to the museum.

We talked and laughed and felt deliciously, dangerously free for the whole day ahead. We wouldn't be expected to be home early with Reevee's mother to watch us. The day stretched like a long golden ribbon, interrupted suddenly by the conductor's yell: "Jackson Park El station." We climbed the stairs, the warm wind blowing dust and candy wrappers at us. Out of the great black space, the sound began, growing, expanding, swelling until with a roar and a scream of brakes, the green train halted, shuddering for an instant as the doors opened. We went directly to the platform area between the trains and though they had lately been screened, we could feel the wind and watch the cars move against each other. The train hurtled above the city, and we watched the flying buildings. Sometimes the train halted between stations and we could look into the windows of the dingy flats. Poor people lived here, with their ragged laundry flapping crazily in the wind. I closed my eyes to shut them away from me.

Soon the train curved underground flying across the bottom of Chicago, its wheels holding fast to the tracks, saying yesnoyesnoyesnoyesno. Stations whirled past faster, faster, and finally with a great jerk that sent us forward and backward in the same motion, we halted at the 55th Street Station.

I held Sonny's hand tightly. We walked toward the park, crossed the street, straining to see the round blue dome. There it was, in the middle of a gently rising slope, waiting. Crowds swarmed over the hill, the stairs, the statues, like ants. We were soon part of them but we went directly inside, eager to get down to the coal mine.

"Which way is it to the coal mine? " I asked a policeman. He smiled and said it was across the hall on the floor below. We found it with a line stretching from the elevators to the end of the room. "We'll never get in," Sonny moaned and then over a loudspeaker a voice spoke: "The next tour leaves in ten minutes." We didn't know how many people could go on each tour; maybe all of us, we hoped. Suddenly a wall of elevator doors opened. A uniformed guard stepped out of each. "All right, please walk slowly inside and turn around. When the elevator is full, we'll begin our descent." The word sent a shiver through me. We pushed and were pushed but held tightly to each other, "Are you afraid?" "Yes." "Are you?" "Yes."

The elevator was packed so tight my cheek scratched against the jacket of the man in front of me. Sonny looked terrified.

"This is an actual mine. Not in use right now, except for museum tours. The men you'll see are miners. Please don't call to them. You will see how an actual mine works. First, the men get in the elevator, like this one, and go hundreds of feet below the earth. At the bottom level, they walk through a narrow passageway, moving quietly – sound can cause a cave-in – until they come to the place they're mining. That area is usually no bigger than what a man can squat in. One man at a time goes in. Everybody has a special job. Some chip the coal away, some carry it, some stack it. All the men wear lights on their safety hats and carry oxygen tanks in case of emergency."

Sonny was blue and I could see the whites of her eyes too large. I felt her nails digging half moons in my fingers. My own throat ached too much to say anything to her.

A small bump and the doors creaked open. It was dark, black, damp, shiny, wet, cold, all at the same time. "Oooo." Just a whisper sounded.

We walked silently, listening to the drone of the guard. I lost interest in his words when he began to define the types of coal. "Bituminous . . ." I heard. It sounded nice though I had no idea what it meant. I stretched my head everywhere I could as my feet inched forward. The ceiling was low; I stooped instinctively though I felt I was in a room with no roof at all. I touched the walls, felt their clammy, ice-cold roughness and held onto Sonny. I heard

water dripping far at the end of the narrow tunnel. The spaces got smaller and tighter and suddenly I wanted to run. Away. Up. Into light. Sweat prickled but my hands were freezing. I felt tears heavy under my eyelids. I was hardly aware of Sonny and too frightened to look at her. I had to run away from this dungeon that would crush us both. Then I heard a voice from a great distance. "Thank you. Please step lightly into the elevator and turn around. The tour is completed."

When at last we could breathe again, the clock in the waiting room had moved only twenty minutes. Impossible! But now we were safe and as we put steps between the mine and ourselves, we began to enjoy it, laugh and tell each other how exciting a "real mine is."

We moved through rooms filled with dinosaurs, arrow heads, bones of men a million years old, mummy cases (we imagined they were filled with fleshed out corpses), rocks, jewels, stuffed animals, airplanes hanging from the ceiling, telephones that worked like televisions, and an incubator packed closely with hatching baby chicks. We pressed our foreheads to the glass, prayed, waited and waited, but no little chicks emerged from the rocking, cracking eggs. Sonny moved away reluctantly, straining over her shoulder to see.

"Look, Gypsy!" We raced back to the incubator. One egg cracked and we watched as a tiny, wet head emerged. "Look, look, its body is coming!" From the broken shell a skinny form struggled to get free. It wobbled and fell, took a few more uncertain steps and finally walked. We smiled til our cheeks wouldn't stretch anymore.

"C'mon."

"Do we have to go home?"

"We better, I don't like to ride the El when it's dark."

"Okay."

"Let's buy ice cream first. Whatta you want? Chocolate or vanilla?"

"An Eskimo Pie."

All the long ride home, the El rocked us in happiness. I had forgotten my lie but when I saw my mother's face, I knew she knew.

"Hello, girls. Did you have a nice time?"

"Wonderful, Mother, it was so wonderful."

"How were Reevee and her mother?"

"Okay, I guess. I didn't ask."

"You mean you didn't see them?"

"Hnh?"

"You didn't go with them, did you? Reevee's mother didn't take you. She never had any plans to take you, because she never even thought of going, isn't that it?"

"No."

My heart beat and thumped against my chest. I saw the belt flash. In-

stinctively, I raised my arm to my face.

The first blow stung my hip. Again and again the strap burned into my legs, my hands, the back of my neck.

"Please, stop, please, I'm sorry, I'll never lie again." I was sobbing, screaming, begging her to stop.

"Liars are bums, tramps. Is that what you're going to be? " Her face was purple. But she stopped.

I could hear someone's step in the dark room. I tensed again for the blow. The hand that lay against my hair was small and square. "Gypsy, I had the best time," she whispered, her little arms tightening in a hug.

FRAN GOODMAN